

# VARIEGATED MEANINGS, IDENTITY, SECULARISM AND MAHESH DATTANI'S “FINAL SOLUTIONS”

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to analyze the present socio-political scenario of India with special reference to Mahesh Dattani's famous play “Final Solutions” and Ashutosh Varshney's critical work “Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the politics of Anxiety”. India is debilitated by various ethnic and communal hatred and the only way to have an efficacious remedy is to have a realization that hatred breeds hatred and further debilitate the condition that is already ignominious but a benevolent act can change a fundamentalist like Javed in Dattani's “Final Solutions”.

**Keywords:** Secularism, National Identity, Communal Hatred.

## INTRODUCTION

Mahesh Dattani is a celebrated Indian playwright who wrote on Indian society and endeavored to give a pertaining insight to the human psyche. He was the eminent artist that expressed his concern towards the ethnic and communal conflict in India. His “Final Solutions” is a testimony of his response to the deplorable social setup of India that are enmeshed with variegated religious ideologies at stake. He, as an Indian playwright, had the forte to address those pervasive issues that had debilitated the whole socio-political setup of India.

Ashutosh Varshney, an erudite political scientist expressed his concern over different types of nationalism that are at work in India. According to him a pernicious conflict among varieties of nationalism has distinguished Indian politics of late – a secular nationalism, a Hindu nationalism and two separatist nationalisms. Separatist nationalism is a curse in Kashmir and Punjab as mentioned by Ashutosh Varshney. As a democratic country, India follows secularism but in its true sense, secularism has become exhausted and insipid not because secularism is unsuited in India but political ramifications have made it quite colorless. One of the strongest impacts on secularism and its further degradations may be attributed to ideological ramifications of Hinduism and its forceful impact on other religions that has made secularism in India deplorable and worn out.

## VARIEGATED NATIONALISMS AND MAHESH DATTANI'S RESPONSE TO IT:

Hindu nationalism and secular nationalism are constantly at conflict, Hindu nationalism is giving importance on territory and religion but secularism stresses the need of giving importance more on culture and territory. The difference between the two nationalisms can be best explained with an example. The first Prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru wanted his body to be cremated and wished to scatter his ashes in in the river Ganga not because it is considered pious in Hinduism but it has cultural significance:

“When I die, I should like my body to be cremated...A small handful of (my) ashes should be thrown into the Ganga... My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown into the ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have been attached to the Ganga and Jamuna rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have grown older, this attachment has grown...Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present and flowing on the great ocean of the future.”

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mahesh Dattani is a serious play writer and he has a special forte to unmask what has yet to shed light on, he is endowed with a special quality to elucidate the most disturbing trend of communal violence and threats to Indian secularism. The play “Final Solutions” deals with such serious and all pervasive problems of communal hatred and bias that has created India an eerie land to live on. But the problem of the present study lies whether secularism is ill-treated or unsuitable in India’s socio-political scenario. Problems also arise when discussions are done on the role of politics in embezzling the contagious issues. Moreover, politics could have saved the nation from making social life quite constrained contaminated by communal hatred and animosity but instead it has involved in a mud throwing politics and has debilitated socio-political condition of India.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To show the dissention between varieties of nationalism in Mahesh Dattani’s “Final Solutions”
2. To explore the role of politics in making secularism insipid and exhausted in India .
3. To investigate Mahesh Dattani’s attempt to reiterate that a nation is not just a cultural community but a sovereign cultural community.
4. To explain men-made religion pernicious that has persecuted many innocent people of this land.

#### ETHNIC VIOLENCE, THREATS TO SECULARISM AND COMMUNAL DISTRUST

The play begins with a mob chasing two Muslim youths, the only crime they had committed was that they belonged to a different community, the mob found them malicious as they did not belong to the same religion. The mob had evil intentions and wanted to slay the two Muslim youths.

“Chorus1 (pounding with his stick): Send...them...back. (Pause)

Chorus4 (questioning): Send them back?

Chorus2 (pounding with stick): Drive...them...out. (Pause)

Chorus5 (questioning) Drive...them...out?

Chorus 3: Kill the sons of swine! ”

Here, Dattani portrays the communal hatred all- pervasive in Indian society. But all people of the society is not the same as portrayed the above, Ramanik Gandhi, a Hindu provided shelter to the Muslim youths to the much surprise of his other family members. In due course of time, it was revealed that Smita, daughter of Ramnik Gandhi, knows Javed and Bobby. Javed was harsh to Ramanik family unlike Bobby as he said “It must feel good being majority, they have full liberty to do whatever they like”.

True identity of Javed was revealed by Smita, Javed was a hired criminal, he was brought to kill the *purohit* of the Rath Yatra. But Javed was a man of flesh and blood and full of mercy although he was harsh in his demeanor, he could not kill the *purohit* and threw the knife he was given but somebody else took the knife and

stabbed the *purohit* that caused a huge uproar and was followed by communal conflict. Both Hindus and Muslims tried to slay one another.

Chorus 1: Their chariot fell on our street!

Chorus 2: Their god now prostrate before us!

Chorus 3: So they blame on us?

Chorus 1: Was the chariot built by us?

Chorus 2, 3: Blame the builders of those frenzy thrones.

Chorus 4: A manufacturing defect!

Chorus 5: Doesn't their God have a warranty?

Thus, a community tried to blame the other and the 'simple' act of breaking down of a Hindu idol caused furors in the area and response to the event of the police and politicians a facial and politicians fabricated the whole matter and tried to feather their own nest. People like Javed, the so-called *jihadi*, was a result of the fissiparous politicians with facades of honesty.

### UNSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS YET NO FINAL SOLUTIONS

Javed and Bobby were persecuted by the aggressive mob, and the petrified duo took shelter in Ramnik's house and their solace was short lived after Ramnik deflated Javed's obduracy by sharp cutting remarks on his fundamentalist practices but Bobby told him that his people were partially responsible for his moral degradation as once he was the village hero. A dispirited man dispersed Javed's innocence when he was asked to deliver a letter to a neighbor; he found that the place where he put the letter was later cleaned by the Hindu as he found that the place became untouchable. The dyspeptic person later bitterly treated the small boy Javed when he threw beef meats in his house. The neighbor could have forgiven him as he was in a very tender age instead he nullified all innocence of Javed by using angry words, Javed perpetuated a revenge motif on every Hindus as he was later egged by people heving vested interest. But later he understood that he was deceived by some fraudulent people as he tried to fraternize with the family members of Ramnik family.

In due course of time, Bobby entered into the small temple of Ramnik's house and respectfully lifted the idol in his hands and said:

"Bobby: (extends his hands and shows the image to everyone)

see! I am touching God!

Chorus all (pounding thrice): We are not idol breakers!

Bobby: Your God! My flesh is holding him! Look, Javed!

and he does not mind!"

The surprised act of lifting the lord Krishna's idol suggests his zeal to deflate pseudo-religious practitioners. It seems that he tried to suggest that now-a-days God is of two types: the God who has made us and the God whom we have made. Moreover, the God who has made us we have never seen him yet are prone to fight in his name.

After the two Muslim boys left the house, Ramnik revealed a truth that he concealed for years. The truth has deflated Ramnik's mother's pseudo pride of being a Hindu. Ramnik and his father burnt down Zarine's shop, Zarine was Hardika's (Ramnik's mother) friend. Ramnik and his father involved in the execrable act in the name of communal hatred with a fraudulent attempt to buy the shop in a reduced price. Ramnik was successful to buy the shop in a lesser price but he is feeling between the devils and deep sea as he is in a vortex of

emotions that has engulfed him and found him petrified to go to his shop that he bought by plotting communal hatred.

## CONCLUSION

From our discussion, it has become crystal clear that politics and culture do not constitute a nation but emotions and loyalty do as propagated by Hindus. Syncreticism, pluralism and tolerance are not corner stones of Indian nationalism and thus one community tries to overpower the other by putting forward their vested interest and Mahesh Dattani's play "Final Solutions" is living testimony of such impediments.

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